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## Part I: **Background / Settings**



# 1 Arab perspectives on the late Ottoman Empire

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**This chapter:** As already made clear in the Introduction, and as the reader rightly can expect from a volume entitled *Emerging Subjectivity*..., the focus of the present collection of studies lies on processes that, for the most part, ‘take place’ *within* the minds of Middle Easterners during the so-called “long nineteenth century”. Our main interest is not in the ‘outside world’ (with its political, social, economic etc. constellations) but in the way the emerging subject meets this outside world (as its object), conceives of it, interacts with it, ‘processes’ it mentally and emotionally. Why then an opening chapter dealing, to a large extent, with the political situation and questions of national independence and belonging, a chapter that sketches the Arabs’ navigation between two ‘masters’ – the Turks on the one hand, and the West on the other – and their gradual emancipation from both, culminating in a call for national independence?

It is clear from the mode in which this navigation happens – all voices we meet in this chapter are the voices of *public intellectuals* – that most of the processes of ‘emerging subjectivity’ that the present book is about are strongly virulent, or already completed, in the protagonists who are speaking here. Listening to their voices, we are witnessing not so much cases of *emerging* subjectivity but rather of a subjectivity that *has already emerged* and is now seeking to establish and consolidate itself. The Arab intellectuals of this period clearly are aware of their distinct Arab identity and their status as political subjects, and they are clearly motivated by a sense of agency that is based on an – explicit or intuitive – feeling that any human subject should have the right to unfold in its subjectivity, with all that entails, in freedom.

The negotiation that we will observe in this chapter can show us two things. First, the emerged subjects, with their capability and desire to analyse, criticize, reorganize the world and to ‘live themselves’, are looking for the best outside conditions that allow them to do so. They are completely aware of the pros and cons of the political, social, economic, and cultural constellations and are seeking for the most favourable balance that might guarantee them both the freedom to unfold and the recognition of the identities they not only are conscious but also very proud of and want to be respected for. For a long time, the scales of this balance continue to tip in favour of what is believed to secure outward political stability, i.e., a solution under the roof of the Ottoman Empire. The sultan may be a despot,

yes; and, yes, severe censorship often restricts a free unfolding of one's identity. But still, compared to the disrespect for 'Oriental' identities that speaks out of the West's colonialist exploitative approach to the Arab countries and its quest for cultural hegemony, the old empire appears to be the better choice. – But it is, secondly, not only for fear of disrespect or loss of (territorial as well as cultural) status and integrity that the emerged Arab subjects prefer, for a long time, to remain under the Ottoman roof. It seems that the newly emerged subject also senses that its subjectivity is still somehow vulnerable, in danger of being questioned, diverted, or even corrupted if it were to leave the protecting 'home' of the familiar ancient empire and instead opened for still more, and stronger, Western influence and supremacy. The path of reform and modernisation that the newly emerged subjects were envisaging for themselves and their societies could only be followed by strong, self-confident subjects who knew exactly what they were doing and who were sure that they would stand firmly in face of possible, and expectable, challenges. Therefore, the West was better kept at a distance. It had to remain a West that one could continue to let oneself be inspired by but at the same time a West that was still far away and not powerful enough to interfere with direct normative, authoritative prescriptions into the consolidation of the still vulnerable emerged subjectivity.

Jens Hanssen speaks of the cultural anxiety of the Nahḍawī intellectual (cf., e.g., Hanssen 2006, 193, 216–217), and this anxiety – which is also the anxiety of possibly being prevented, by a too dominant West, from developing a strong, self-conscious and self-confident cultural 'personality' – was certainly among the most virulent factors that for a long time made Arabs prefer the safe haven of the old empire.

As will be evident from this chapter, too, the shifting scales of the pro vs. con balance later leaned towards independence (from both Ottomans *and* the West).

As will be evident from this chapter, the shifting scales of the pro vs. con balance later leaned towards independence (from both Ottomans and the West). This change is interpreted in the chapter as a result of growing discomfort with the old, inherited political framework. The Ottoman 'roof' was increasingly turning into a nationalistic Turkish yoke. Additionally, the colonial powers were exploiting the country, treating the local population with contempt, cruelty, and injustice. In Egypt, for instance, the Dinshawāy incident of 1906 highlighted these injustices. Furthermore, the colonial powers had begun dividing other parts of the Middle East, such as Mesopotamia and the Levant, into "spheres of influence" in an imperialistic manner. However, it is unlikely that the idea of national independence solely resulted from Turkish anti-Arab racism and British-French im-

perialism. It also gained traction due to the fact that the formerly still quite anxious emerging subject had had time, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, to consolidate itself and now acted from a stronger, more mature and courageous standpoint.

Chapter 1 thus describes the emerged subjectivity's transition from one stage to another. In Chapter 2, the first of these two stages will be equated with a global period labelled *Reproductionism* by the late Walter Falk,<sup>1</sup> a period roughly corresponding to what in European history usually is called *Restoration* (a term that, in my view, should be considered as an adequate rendering of the Ottoman *tanẓīmāt*<sup>2</sup>). According to Falk, in this period the human being is still unable to effect fundamental change in the world although it would often like to do so. Rather, it experiences the existing order of things as stronger and eventually remains satisfied with its re-formation, accepting it, and contenting itself with some (non-substantial, often superficial) modification. In the arts and in literature, this approach to the world is reflected in a tendency to 'realistic' representation (sometimes with some formal embellishment); in politics, one observes either restoration (acknowledging the authority of *older* laws) or progressism (believing in the authority of *new* laws, a new order of things); in the sciences, the prototypical figure is the registering scholar, the positivist (registering old or new laws, but in any case *laws*, the laws of an *existing* order/system). The period of *Reproductionism* (ca. 1820–1880) is followed, according to Falk, by that of *Creativism* (ca. 1880–1910), a period in which the human subject still experiences the outside world as unshakeable, dead, petrified, but in which the subject's desire to change the prevalent order of things is at least capable of imagining a fundamentally new type of existence. In Falk's view, the prototype of this period is the creative artist or writer.

If Falk's description of the two stages in the development of human subjectivity during which the *Nahḍa* unfolds is meaningful, then we may perhaps say that the Arab intellectuals' hesitant sticking to the Ottoman roof roughly corresponds to Falk's *Reproductionism*, while the imagination of alternative political and social systems at a later stage could be interpreted as expression of a "Creative" mindset.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Falk (1924–2000), formerly professor of German Literature at Marburg University.

<sup>2</sup> Be it "reform", be it "restoration", both English terms rightly start with the *re-* prefix, as the *tanẓīmāt* aim at *re*-installing a previous "order", or "system" (*niẓām*), where also innovation ultimately is *re*-novation, *re*-ordering.

## 1.1 Introduction

In his little lexicon about *The Arab World*, Alexander Flores starts his entry about the role and importance of the Ottomans for this region stating that, until the end of World War I, the overwhelming majority of the Arab populations, including the elites, remained loyal subjects of the Ottoman Empire (Flores 2003, 202). Flores explains this as the result of a long history of relatively uncomplicated Ottoman-Arab relations,<sup>3</sup> relations that had remained so uncomplicated because the Ottomans always employed non-Turkish Muslims (as well as non-Muslims) on all levels of administration and did not make, before the early twentieth century, any attempts to stress *Turkishness* as a leading ideology. In contrast to what later Arab nationalists often want to make their readers believe, Ottoman administration did, as a rule, not mean foreign oppression for the Arabs (Flores 2003, 202).<sup>4</sup>

Flores's general assessment is corroborated by that of several others.<sup>5</sup> Yet it does not explain why the Ottoman state would issue several decrees that made everybody living under Ottoman rule into equal citizens of the state, irrespective of religious or ethnic affiliation.<sup>6</sup> In 1869, the ideology – generally referred to as ‘Ottomanism’<sup>7</sup> – was even translated into the Ottoman Nationality Act which made all subjects of the Empire equal before the law, after the Imperial Edict (*Ḥaṭṭ-ı Hümāyūn*) of 1856 had already granted religious freedom and the

3 The Levant had become Ottoman in 1516, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula incl. Yemen in 1517, Iraq in 1539, Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica in 1557, Tunisia and Algeria in 1574; cf. Berger et al., eds. 1987, 44.

4 For some specimens of twentieth century Arab national ideology that lumped Mamluks, Ottomans and British colonizers into one category of oppressors of the past, cf. Reinkowski 2016, passim. In his *Philosophy of the Revolution* (ca. 1960), the “great leader” Gamal Abdel Nasser even quoted, approvingly, his ancestors with their saying, *yā rabb yā mutagallī*, ‘*ihlik il-‘uthmānī*’ [read ‘*uṣmallī*’, with *n > l* assimilation, for reasons of rhyme] “Oh Lord, who art manifest in Thy deeds, destroy the Ottoman(s)”; quoted in German *ibid.*, 237; Arabic original as in Gamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir [ca. 1960], 45; English translation following Badawi and Hinds 1986, s.r. v<sup>1</sup>gly.

5 Cf., e.g., Thomas Philipp who holds that “[b]efore World War I we hear practically no Arab voice demanding Arab independence”: Philipp 2014, 115.

6 Cf., e.g., Shaw 1971, 24–159, 135.

7 Although, if Alp E. Topal is right, the corresponding Turkish term, ‘*Oṣmānhıcılık*’, is not attested earlier than in 1913, one may well nevertheless speak, as historians usually do, of an ‘Ottomanist’ ideology, an Ottomanism *avant la lettre*, meaning a ‘pan-Ottoman’ ideology that sought to include all subjects of the Ottoman state as equal citizens with equal rights (e.g., religious freedom, primary education, etc.) and duties (esp. taxes and military service). Cevik refers to this very same concept as “imperial nationalism”. Cf. Topal 2021, 82, and Çevik 2021, 59.

equality of ethnic groups and religions in administration.<sup>8</sup> Historians agree that these and similar measures that, in Salim Cevik's words, attempted "to transform all the subjects of an empire into an all-inclusive imperial national identity" (Cevik 2021) were triggered mainly by the need to counter ever-growing European influence and involvement in the Empire and to contain the destabilising impact Western political ideology, especially nationalism and the ideas of the French Revolution, and Western cultural hegemony might have on the Empire's inner stability.

Ottoman fears of this kind were indeed not unfounded. Revolts in the Balkans (Serbia 1804–06, 1815–17) and the Greek War of Independence (1821–29) had already led to territorial losses, Algeria had become a French colony in 1830, and England and France were active on a large scale in several parts of the Arab world. The successes of independence movements in Europe could, Ottomans were afraid, possibly inspire similar secessionist tendencies in other parts of the Empire, among which the Arab regions; non-Muslim minorities were already being courted and promised support by European powers overall in the Empire, especially so in the Levant, where France even intervened militarily as a 'protector' of the Christian Maronites after the 1860–61 civil war. And Western ideas were indeed eagerly received also by Arab elites because they seemed to provide useful models for the East on its way to the much-desired 'progress', 'civilisation', and 'modernity'.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Arabs also saw the negative aspects of European influence, from direct colonisation (as in the case of Algeria) and political-military interference (as in Lebanon or, earlier, on the Crimea) to economic exploitation and an erosion of the East's cultural self-esteem.<sup>10</sup> Thus, while the Western

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**8** For an analysis of the legal implications of the Edict, see Ozil 2021, 169–90.

**9** For an early encounter with Western culture and civilisation, still unbiased by the negative impact of European colonialism, cf. Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's (1801–1871) detailed – and rather appreciative, though not at all uncritical – report about his study mission to France, 1826–1831: *Takhlīṣ al-ibriz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz*, aw: *al-Diḡān al-naḡis bi-'iwān Bārīs* (The Extraction of Gold: an Overview of Paris), ed. N.N. (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-miṣriyya al-'amma lil-kitāb, [1834] 1993). For an analysis of the later development of the image of the West in Arabic fiction (and drama), cf. Wielandt 1980 and El-Enany 2006.

**10** One of the most significant expressions of criticism of Westernisation is the emergence, from the middle of the nineteenth century, of the character of the *mutaḡarnij*, the "Euromaniac", in Arabic literature (corresponding to the *alaḡranga zūppe* "Euro-fop" in Turkish). Through these types, the authors ridicule the unquestioned adoption of European fashion, attitudes, and habits, mostly from a moral (but, in Turkish, also from an economic) perspective. At the same time,

model looked promising in many respects (technology, culture), European powers were also felt as a danger, so that, on the political scale, the good old Ottoman Empire still seemed to be the safer haven. For a long time, therefore, most Arabs saw their own interests better served within the framework of the existing Empire and readily accepted the ‘pan-Ottoman’ social contract. Ottomanism seemed to allow them to preserve their identities and proceed on the path of modernisation, seen as a combination of technological progress à l’Européenne and a ‘national’ Arab cultural ‘revival’ or ‘renaissance’ (*nahḍa*). There did not seem to be a reason to rise against the Ottoman Empire, and love for one’s homeland (*waṭan*) would not be incompatible with loyalty towards the Empire and a larger ‘Ottoman nation’. However, whenever the Ottomans prevented, or seemed to prevent, them from following their own Arab agendas, the European states could become quasi-natural allies. As we will see below, there was also a lot of (regional and other) variation and a historical dynamic in their manoeuvring between these two poles, because Ottomanism, from the beginning, was not uncontroversial: for the Muslims, it meant the elimination of their previous superior position in the State, while non-Muslims not only gained new rights but also lost former privileges.

The following essay presents some of the choices made by Arab *literati*—‘intellectuals’<sup>11</sup> living at the time. Far from claiming to be a comprehensive overview, the chapter should be read as a selective and impressionist first approach to a vast area of research. Important complementary, and partly overlapping, information is found in the present volume. Salim Cevik discusses, among other things, the frequent vacillation between loyalty to the Empire and local patriotism, observable also among ‘my’ Arabs. Madeleine Elfenbein emphasises the role of non-Muslim journalism in the promotion of Ottomanist attitudes and Isa Blumi studies the diverse forms and aims of Ottomanism among Albanian activists and intellectuals. However, with regard to the territory from which their

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they are eager to promote pride in one’s own, ‘Eastern’ culture (termed *wujūd ahlī* “the indigeneous way of life” in the probably earliest piece of ‘modern’ Arabic fiction, Khalīl al-Khūrī’s *Way! Idhan lastu bi-lfranji* “Alas! I am not a European then!” of 1859/60; the corresponding term in Turkish is *alaturkahk* “life *alla turca*”). On the *mutafarnij/alafranga züppe*, cf. my own study, Guth 2019 (online)/2020 (print), with further references.

<sup>11</sup> Although at the time no specific term had been coined yet for ‘intellectual’ in Arabic—nor was English *intellectual* used in the modern sense before the late nineteenth century—, the group of educated people who used to be referred to as *udabā’* ‘literati’ (sg. *adīb*) can probably be seen as ‘intellectuals *avant la lettre*’, given that they were thinkers who engaged with the vital reality of the contemporary world and commented in public on matters they regarded of relevance for their community.

sources originate, both remain, by and large, within the confines of the centre, whereas ‘my’ voices stem from the Arab provinces. And while Elfenbein sheds light particularly on Christians (Elfenbein 2021), my article not only covers Christians (M. al-Naqqāsh, B. al-Bustānī, J. Zaydān, Kh. Muṭrān, F. Anṭūn, L.M. Sawāyā, Ī. Abū Māḍī), but also includes some Muslim positions (A. al-Qabbānī, M. S. al-Bārūdī, I. al-Muwayliḥī, A. al-Ṣayyādī, ‘A. al-Kawākibī, M. al-Ruṣāfī, S. al-Ḥuṣrī). As a whole, it documents a development that matches very well Cevik’s and Elfenbein’s findings: It also shows how widely spread Ottomanist attitudes were, and perhaps especially, among non-Muslims and in the peripheries and how active these groups remained for a long time in promoting an all-inclusive Ottoman identity (perhaps more active than the Muslim Ottomans in the centre themselves); but it also demonstrates that loyalty towards the Ottoman State decreased in relation to the degree Ottoman authorities would narrow their vision of the Ottoman nation from an inclusive multinational Habsburgian model to an exclusive Romanov type of nationalism (Cevik 2021).

## 1.2 Mid- to end-nineteenth century

As mentioned above, the ‘starting position’ that we can assume for the middle of the nineteenth century to have been the prevalent Arab attitude vis-à-vis Ottoman authority was, in general, loyalty towards the state, seen mostly as a guarantor and protector of relative freedom to preserve one’s religious, linguistic and ethnic-cultural identity and as a bulwark against European colonialism. As pointed out by Madeleine Elfenbein (2021), Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883) had prepared an Arabic translation of the Imperial Edict of 1856, and it is no wonder to find many Arabs of the time continuing the old panegyric tradition (*madiḥ*) in praising the Empire and the Sultan or his local representatives wherever appropriate (Sadgrove 2010b, 248). For instance, Mārūn al-Naqqāsh (1817–1855), another famous pioneer of Arab theatre,<sup>12</sup> after obtaining permission

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the author, see Sadgrove 2010b, with further references. Like operas and the novel, theatre too counted among the “modern” genres, introduced in the Middle East, in adaptations from the European model, by the mid-nineteenth century with the hope that it would help reform society and advance civilisational progress. For more on the history of Arab(ic) drama and theatre in general, cf. Starkey, “theatre and drama, modern”, in Meisami and Starkey, eds. 1998, 769–72, with further references, among them M. M. Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Jacob M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), and Nada Tomiche, *Le théâtre*

from the Ottoman authorities in Syria to produce *al-Bakhīl* (The Miser, 1847), a play inspired by Molière's *L'Avare*, lets its protagonist sing (in Act II, Scene 5) the praises of Sultan 'Abd al-Majīd (Abdūlmecit), and this is repeated by the actors behind the curtain (Sadgrove 2010b, 248). In a similar vein, another play, *al-Salīṭ al-ḥasūd* (The Envious, Impertinent One), staged a few years later,

ends with a prayer to God to punish the enemies and bring victory to the Sultan, followed by an epilogue, a prayer for sultan 'Abd al-Majīd and the foreign minister 'Alī Pasha, sung by the actors [...]. Thanks are also addressed to Amin Mukhlīṣ Pasha, the governor of Sidon, who had encouraged Mārūn to set up the theatre and write the plays to open the 'door of civilization' in the country.

(Sadgrove 2010b, 249)

Al-Naqqāsh was prudent enough to make sure he had the authorities' backing. He died before the first Lebanese civil war of 1860–61,<sup>13</sup> but in the sectarian atmosphere prevailing after the events, it would certainly have been difficult for him, as a Christian, to continue his activities without official support, especially since conservative Muslim circles often disapproved of theatre as 'idolatry', or of the 'misrepresentation' of revered historical personalities in it. As the case of Naqqāsh's younger colleague, Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī (1833–1902),<sup>14</sup> shows, these circles could become very influential. When a chief *ulema* allegedly complained to the Sultan that, "as a result of the theatre's increasing popularity, adultery and sin were spreading in Syria, and women were mixing with men," then obviously it did not matter that al-Qabbānī, too, used to begin and end his performances "with praise or prayers for the Ottoman caliph and sultan" and that he even compared, in the epilogue of one play, Sultan 'Abdūlḥamīd's justice to that of the great 'Abbāsīd caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (Sadgrove 2010a, 273). Nor was it relevant that he was Muslim and from a family of

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*arabe* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969); a more recent study is Monica Ruocco, *Storia del teatro arabo: Dalla nahḍah a oggi* (Roma: Carocci, 2010).

**13** Tensions that had been smoldering for some years between Maronite Christian peasants and their Druze landlords, eventually erupted in 1860 after the peasants' leader, Ṭanyūs Shāhīn, had demanded that the feudal class abolish their privileges, and the peasants had begun to revolt. During the clashes, thousands of Maronites were massacred, with Ottoman troops directly or indirectly aiding the Druze forces. The conflict became even more complicated through the involvement of France (as a 'protector' of the Maronites) and the British (who objected to prolonged French presence in the country and argued that pacification should be left to the Ottomans).

**14** Despite al-Naqqāsh's precedence, it is usually al-Qabbānī who is regarded today the "father" of Arab(ic) theatre.

Turkish origin and that his theatrical enterprises had been firmly and even financially supported, since 1879, by the enlightened governor, Midḥat Pasha. The chief *ulama*'s evidently weighed heavier, so that as a consequence, it is alleged, "an order was issued banning acting in Damascus in 1884, and al-Qabbānī's theatre was burnt to the ground, perhaps as the result of an arson attack" (Sadgrove 2010a, 268). Following this, the director decided to leave Syria. Together with most of his troupe of actors, writers, poets, composers, singers, musicians and dancers he moved to the "greener pastures" of Egypt (Elfenbein in the present volume) that was nominally still part of the Ottoman Empire but since 1882 already under British occupation, where he found a much more liberal atmosphere, as did several other Levantine intellectuals who had gone through similar experiences.

In spite of such experiences, but also because of the severe censorship that 'Abdülḥamīd had introduced,<sup>15</sup> as well as the corresponding "inquisition" (Hassan 2006, 31) and persecution, many of this group of *shawām*, i.e., immigrants from Greater Syria (*al-Shām*),<sup>16</sup> nevertheless remained loyal to the Sultan and/or the Empire even after their emigration. Thus, the first thing for the Syrian writer-philosopher Farah Anṭūn (1874–1922) to do after his arrival in Egypt in 1897 was to found a journal he significantly named *al-Jāmi'a al-'Uthmāniyya*,<sup>17</sup> a term that usually is translated as 'Ottoman Union/Community' but may perhaps even be rendered as 'Ottoman Patriotism'.<sup>18</sup> From this we may conclude

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15 On censorship in the Empire in general, cf. Cioeta 1979.

16 Often, emigration from Greater Syria was also motivated by other than political reasons—economic, social, religious, ...—and headed for the Americas rather than Egypt (although Egypt was de facto independent already since the Ottoman governor, Meḥmed/Muḥammad 'Alī, in 1841 had been granted the right to life-long rule and hereditary successorship to his position). The first immigrants to North America, e.g., arrived around 1850. A larger wave left their home countries after the 1860/61 civil war. During the following years, many sought refuge abroad from periodic inter-communal strife at home. In the American exile ('the' *mahjar*) as well as in Egypt, Syrians, mostly Christian *literati*, played an important role in the establishment and operation of the private printing press and, through it, the stimulation of lively public debate on all kinds of issues of relevance for the local societies, and the Arabs at large; in this way, they played a prominent role in the development of a modern public discourse and the creation of an Arab civil society. See, e.g., Landau 1968 (check index for 'Diaspora' and 'Emigranten, Emigration').

17 Hassan 2006, 29. – From the 13th issue (15 Sept. 1899) onwards, the attribute *'uthmāniyya* was dropped, cutting the title down to the more general *al-Jāmi'a*.

18 Late nineteenth / early twentieth century Arabic conceptual terminology is still rather unspecific and 'volatile'. While, today, *jāmi'a* most often denotes 'university', the literal sense of the word—an active participle meaning 'the gathering one, uniting one'—is still more graspable

that, for intellectuals like Anṭūn, Ottomanism obviously still made sense – perhaps even still as much, or nearly as much, as it had made sense for Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī (1850–1909) whom earlier scholarly literature viewed as one of the most important Arab propagandists of the Sultan’s pan-Islamic-coloured Ottomanism (Eich 2007). Al-Ṣayyādī had become *naqīb al-ashraf*<sup>19</sup> of Aleppo at a very young age and in 1879 advanced to the position of a religious adviser to the young ‘Abdülhamid II. “Once established in the Sultan’s entourage in Istanbul, he [also] became the most important Rifā‘iyya *shaykh* of the Ottoman Empire” (Eich 2007), a position he used primarily to work for the integration of scholars from northern Syria and Iraq – indeed, ‘integration’ could be yet another apt translation of the term *jāmi‘a*! In addition, more recent research tends to see the scholar more as a reformer than as a pan-Islamist, so that one may have to regard his Ottomanism as more secular than previously assumed. This can be corroborated by the fact that, “[i]n his later writings, especially those from after 1900, Abū l-Hudā devoted more space to political issues, particularly the new ideology of nationalism, and argued for a multinational empire” (Eich 2007).<sup>20</sup>

However, stating that Arabs by and large remained loyal to the Empire is not so say that there weren’t also, occasionally, more critical attitudes and voices of protest. In the case of the Egyptian poet Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839–1904), expressions of deep loyalty may even be followed, in one and the same person and quite unexpectedly, by calls to rise against the rulers. Serving in the Ottoman army in its campaign against separatist uprisings in Crete (1866–68), al-Bārūdī had composed a poem in which he

condemned the inhabitants of the island for rising up against their Ottoman overlords, calling them a “people mired in the temptations of Satan (*al-shayṭān*), having slunk away

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in expressions like *jāmi‘a riyaḍiyya* ‘sport association’ or *al-jāmi‘a al-‘arabiyya* ‘The Arab League.’ The latter term, however, can be found in Monteil (1960, 108) also as denoting ‘panarabisme,’ while the same study gives the whole semantic range of *jāmi‘a* as “communauté, union, fédération; ligue; université; accumulateur” (Monteil 1960, 108). ‘Ottoman Patriotism’ for *al-jāmi‘a al-‘uthmāniyya* is the rendering chosen by Hilary Kilpatrick in her translation of the term as used by Jurji Zaydān a decade after Farāḥ Anṭūn in an article on “Arabs and Turks – Before and After the Constitution” (1909, see below).

<sup>19</sup> I.e., head of the descendants of the Prophet.

<sup>20</sup> For Ottomanism transforming into Ottoman *nationalism*, and the Empire into an object of love, see below, p. 23 (Sāṭi‘ al-Ḥuṣṣrī’s idea).

from their obedience to the Sultan (*al-sultān*),” thus implying that rebellion was a sin for which not only secular, but religious, judgment awaited.

(DeYoung 2010a, 63)

When he returned victorious from the campaign, he was awarded the Ottoman Medal of Merit, Fourth Class, by the Sultan, and at first continued to behave like a “staunch supporter of the monarchy” (DeYoung 2010a, 62). In 1868, only two years after his pro-Ottoman poem, however, he suddenly, and for reasons that have remained unclear so far, composed another poem in which he depicted himself as

calling out to the Egyptians: “O People, rise up! Life is but an opportunity and, over time, there are many paths abounding and chances to secure advantage.” This clarion challenge [...] could hardly be read in the context of the times as anything but the most radical exhortation to his audience to rid themselves of the tyrants oppressing them.

(DeYoung 2010a, 63)<sup>21</sup>

When Landau observes a similarly fluctuating attitude almost three decades later in Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī’s stance vis-à-vis the Sultan and the Turks, it seems to him “ambivalent, not to say opportunist” (Landau 1987, 73).<sup>22</sup> Thus, al-Bārūdī and al-Muwayliḥī are probably good cases in point to demonstrate that we can never be sure whether an intellectual’s use of traditional panegyrics has to be taken as a serious expression of wholehearted support or merely a strategic measure of careful self-protection when an author felt the need to voice discontent and criticism but knew very well that this could have severe consequences.

### 1.3 The situation “over there”

The Egyptian Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī (1844–1906) had already had several unpleasant encounters with the Ottoman authorities before he published his “renowned, indeed infamous” report (Allen 2008, 1), titled *Mā hunālika* (Over Yonder<sup>23</sup>), on the state of affairs in contemporary Istanbul, as he viewed it. While in

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**21** For a similar vacillation, also in the context of the rebellion on Crete, cf. Elfenbein 2021, section “Dissidents or Palace Journalists?”

**22** For another case where a local’s vacillating opinion is interpreted by Westerners as “rich illustration of [...] shifty Oriental character” instead of a cautiously and prudently manoeuvring subject, cf. Elfenbein *ibid.*

**23** Literally, “what (is/can be found) there (i.e., in Istanbul)”. “Over Yonder” is Roger Allen’s rendering, Allen 2008, 1 (with note 1, p. 18).

Italy (where he had joined the Egyptian ‘vice-king’, *khedive*<sup>24</sup> Ismā‘īl, on the latter’s deposition/abdication in 1879), al-Muwayliḥī had continued to publish newspapers, most notably *al-Ittiḥād* (The Union), and had penned in it some critical commentaries that “provoked the anger of the Ottoman Sultan”.<sup>25</sup> Shortly later (1884/85), while in France, al-Muwayliḥī had “published a further issue of *Al-Ittiḥad* which was so critical of Ottoman foreign policy that his expulsion from France was engineered by the Ottoman authorities” (Allen 2008, 3).

The affair taught al-Muwayliḥī that it might be wiser to change both his topic and approach. While in London, he therefore turned to attacking the *British* government and writing *in support* of the Sultan (earlier, he had reproached ‘Abdülḥamīd for having remained too passive when England intervened and eventually occupied Egypt after the ‘Urābī uprisings, 1879–82). His tactic worked: Seeking to secure the eloquent journalist’s support, the Sultan invited him to Istanbul in 1885 and appointed him as a Member of the Encümen-i dāniş (≈ Academy of Science) and Under-Secretary of State for Education.

During the following ten years, al-Muwayliḥī gained intimate insight into the structure and processes taking place in the Ottoman state administration. He was shocked and very concerned about the situation, but knowing that the Sultan had his spies everywhere and critics had to reckon with severe punishment he remained silent and held back his observations for more than seven years. However from 1893, it seems that he felt he *had* to break his silence and inform the public about the dangers he saw lying ahead, and so he began to publish, under various pseudonyms, a series of articles in the Cairene press, mostly in the pro-British *al-Muqaṭṭam*. When it came to voicing Ottoman-critical opinions, a certain affiliation with the occupying forces seemed to be a viable compromise although al-Muwayliḥī, ultimately, regarded *foreign* intervention as the real cause of the current deplorable situation (as we will soon see

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<sup>24</sup> The title ‘khedive’ (Arabic *khidiww*/ī, from Persian *khidīw*, *khadīw* ‘lord, prince, ruler’) “was formally conferred by the Sultan upon Ismā‘īl in a *firmān* issued on 8 June 1867 [...]. [... With it,] Ismā‘īl assumed a rank which elevated his standing to a position closer to royalty. [... The title also marked] the virtual independence of Egypt and her right to enter into special treaties and agreements governing posts, customs and trade transit. These provisions were to give Ismā‘īl freedom in the financial, administrative and judicial arrangements of the country” (Vatikiotis 2012). (Reinkowski 2016, 240, n. 9, speaks of a “Phantasietitel”, which is not completely correct.) – When Ottoman suzerainty ended and Egypt officially became a British protectorate (1914), the local rulers would even call themselves “sultan”, and after the end of the protectorate (1922) “kings”.

<sup>25</sup> Citation is from Allen 2008, 3; cf., however, for the other elements of the author’s biography, Landau 1987, 71–72, and Allen 2008 in general.

below). “The Sultan’s spies were on his trail, however,” and “eventually he was found out [and] charged” (Landau 1987, 73). Luckily, he was subsequently acquitted, but, evidently, the lesson sufficed to tell the author that he should leave and he did so in 1895. Back in Egypt, he somehow ‘exploded’: from June 1895 to February 1896, he published, in *al-Muqaṭṭam*, his highly critical and uncensored report about what he had observed *hunālika* “over there”, in Istanbul. His articles were then also collected and brought out as a 256-pages book the same year, still under a pseudonym – “by an honourable/worthy Egyptian man-of-letters” (*li-adīb fāḍil min al-Miṣriyyīn*).<sup>26</sup>

Al-Muwayliḥī paints a devastating picture: a weak sultan, driven in many of his actions by an almost paranoid fear, surrounded by an incapable, only privately-motivated entourage “who have driven away all faithful and capable state officials” (Landau 1987, 74) but live themselves in permanent fear of the myriad of spies whom the Sultan has employed to keep him informed about the smallest details – allegedly, “over 150 reports [are] submitted [to him] daily” (ibid.). Add to this the “duplication of functions as well as the venality, nepotism and ignorance” of many dignitaries, whom the author also accuses of “lacking a minimal sense of patriotism, as in ‘selling’ Tunisia to France or not attending to Egypt’s affairs at the time of uprising”. An inflated bureaucracy and an inefficient military are to blame for the grievous territorial losses of the Empire, financial disorganization, miscarriages of justice and state expropriation of individual land-holdings (ibid., 75). Interestingly enough, however, al-Muwayliḥī nevertheless always remains loyal to the Ottoman state as such. In an article entitled “The Ottoman Nation” (*al-Umma al-‘Uthmāniyya*<sup>27</sup>), pub-

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<sup>26</sup> Publishing anonymously or with a pseudonym was a common practice during the reign of ‘Abdülhamid II (but also later). It secured a certain degree of protection from persecution—not the least so, I would claim, because it turned criticism into a kind of ‘game’ that, by hiding the identity of the speaker, observed the rules of politeness (*adab*) and in this way facilitated non-persecution also for those targeted by criticism.

<sup>27</sup> The Arabic title corresponds to the Turkish ‘*Oṣmānlı millet* or *millet-i ‘Oṣmāniye* ‘Ottoman nation’ mentioned by Salim Çevik 2021 (following Masami Arai) as referring to the idea of the Empire as a nation state. – Arabic *umma* is attested already in pre-Islamic times. With all likelihood, it is a borrowing, either from Hebrew *ummā*<sup>h</sup> ‘tribe, people’ or from the same Sumerian source from which the Hebrew word itself is taken (Jeffery 1938, 69; Pennacchio 2014, 158). In the Koran, where *umma* is of frequent occurrence, it has a broad meaning, signifying a group of people sharing ethnic, religious, moral and/or ideological allegiance. In classical Islamic literature, the word was mainly used to denote the universal Islamic religio-political community

lished a week before the *Mā hunālika* series and later serving as a kind of introduction to the book version,<sup>28</sup> he underlines that, in his opinion, the current situation of disintegration and fragmentation (*tamazzuq, tashattut*) of the Empire is caused, ultimately, by “the foreigners’ interference into its properties” (*tadākhul al-ajānib fī amlākiḥā* – al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 10).<sup>29</sup> Unlike the many opportunists who look at the Ottoman state as if it were a burning house from which one should try to take what the flames have not touched yet, praising oneself lucky to have preceded the collapse, he thinks that a constitutional system could still save the Empire and that it therefore is the task of all honorable men (*aḥrār*) to work towards reform (*iṣlāḥ*) and convince people that “the Ottoman nation’s health is in their [own] hands and that this nation is far from disintegrating and declining [... After all,] the glory [earned] in reviving a nation is better than to be wealthy at its death” (*ibid.*, 12).<sup>30</sup>

To support his argument, he points to the Austrian Empire as a positive example:

with regard to religions (*adyān*), it consists of Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox, Protestants, and Jews, and with regard to ethnic groups (*ajnās*), of Poles, Bohemians, Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Slaves. But this has not been an obstacle for the well-ordered condition (*ḥusn al-nizām*) in which it finds itself.

(al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 11)<sup>31</sup>

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(Lewis 1991, 32). During the Arabic *nahḍa*, the term underwent a process of semantic extension and came to encompass (like Turkish *millet*) the equivalent of French *nation* (as in *al-Umam* [pl.] *al-muttaḥida* ‘The United Nations’), see e.g., Massignon 1941-1946. In this sense, *umma* features as one of the “eight (key) concepts” of the time in the influential Egyptian educator Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī’s *al-Kalim al-thamān* (1881/82); for the author, an *umma* is held together by a unity of language (*lisān*), territory (*makān*), and religion (*dīn*), where language is the most important (Delanoue 1963, 10). For the modern development of the term, where it for some time ‘competed’ with *milla* (which is the source of the Turkish term), see, e.g., Lewis 1991, 38–39, 41.

**28** *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, no. 1898 (22 June 1895), and al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 9–13, respectively.

**29** The author does not specify which interventions he has in mind, but one may think of the French turning Algeria into a colony, the Russians on the Crimea, the French and British in Lebanon, and, of course, the British occupation of Egypt.

**30** *inna l-umma al-‘uthmāniyya dawā’uhā fī yadīhim, wa-hiya ab‘ad al-umam ‘an al-talāshī wa-l-inḥilāl... al-majd fī iḥyā’ umma khayr min al-māl fī mawtiḥā.*

**31** *tata‘allaf, min jihat al-adyān, min kāthūlik wa-muslimin wa-urthūdhuks wa-brūtistānt wa-yahūd, wa-tatashakkal, min jihat al-ajnās, min būlūniyyin wa-būḥimiyyin wa-almāniyyin wa-ṭalyāniyyin wa-majariyyin wa-ṣaqāliba, wa-mā mana‘ahā dhālika min ḥusn al-nizām alladhī hiya ‘alayhi.*

For al-Muwayliḥī, the ideal was still a centralised state headed by the Sultan (Landau 1987, 75); but in order for the system to function properly, it has to be reformed. As an “expert in the characteristics of nations” (*‘ālim bi-akhlāq al-umam* – al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 9), the author regards it as his task to inform the nation of the alarming situation in the capital, to point out the dangers that lie ahead if things continue like they are now, and to urge the “Ottoman nation” “to demand its rights and call on its Government to institute self-reform, maintain the constitution, reconvene parliament, institute a responsible cabinet and extend freedom of thought” (Landau 1987, 74). He draws his motivation from the conviction that, “as it was possible for one man [‘Abdülḥamīd] to paralyze [lit., make lie down, put to sleep] a [whole] nation, it should be possible for one individual also to awaken it again” (al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 10). Given the author’s loyalty and patriotism, “it is undoubtedly ironic,” Landau concludes in his analysis of al-Muwayliḥī’s report, “that the authorities in Egypt, acting upon demands from Istanbul, seized and destroyed most copies of *Mā hunālika* soon after its publication in 1896. A few copies of this work have survived, however, and serve as witness to al-Muwayliḥī’s courage” (Landau 1987, 81).

## 1.4 Mecca, the “Mother of the Cities”

A case that resembles al-Muwayliḥī’s in many ways but also goes an important step further is that of the Syrian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1849 or 1854/55–1902). Like al-Muwayliḥī, al-Kawākibī had gathered intimate knowledge about the Ottoman state and its administration both from serving in official positions and from a longer stay in Istanbul, and like his Egyptian contemporary, he had suffered unpleasant experiences with the authorities when he had voiced sharp, if constructive, criticism. The weekly *al-Shahbā’* that he had started to publish in 1878 in Aleppo had been closed down after only fifteen issues by order of the Ottoman governor due to its outspoken criticism of despotism (in general, but of course alluding to the Sultan) and of his local representative, the *vali* (*wālī*) Cemil (Jamil) Pasha. Sometime later, quarrels with the *wālī* had also brought him to a trial where he was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death; luckily he was acquitted after an appeal, but his property was confiscated nevertheless so that he eventually decided to leave the country. He arrived in Cairo in 1898 or 1899, i.e., only four or five years after al-Muwayliḥī had returned from Istanbul, and like his Egyptian colleague, the first thing al-Kawākibī felt urged to do was publish his critical comments (under pseudonyms, as also al-Muwayliḥī had chosen to do), drafted previously in Syria, on the state of affairs in the Empire. The first of the two books, titled *Umm al-qurā*

(lit., Mother of Cities, i.e., Mecca), came out in 1899 – “almost certainly clandestinely,” as Sylvia Haim assumes (Haim 2012) – and presented a kind of utopia: the vision of an Islamic conference taking place in Mecca, thus not only “illustrating the importance of Mecca to the Islamic world” but also discussing the caliphate and arguing, in Haim’s paraphrasis,

that the problems of Islam would be solved by transferring the caliphate from the house of ‘Uthmān to Quraysh.<sup>32</sup> An Arab caliph would be installed in Mecca and would exercise, with the concurrence of a special council of consultation (*shūrā*), political authority over the Ḥijāz<sup>33</sup> only. This caliphate would be devoid of all other political and military powers; its spiritual nature, as well as the special position of the Arabs within Islam, are greatly stressed.

(Haim 2012)

The fact that al-Kawākibī had stayed in Syria for a long time and continued to work in several official positions – among which even that of mayor of Aleppo – despite regular harassment and intimidation can give proof of his wish to serve his Arab compatriots *from within* the system, i.e., within the existing structures of the late Empire. However, in contrast to al-Muwayliḥī and many others who stuck to this overall framework although they were highly critical of it, ideas like those expressed in *Umm al-qurā* give clear evidence of the fact that, from a certain moment onwards, al-Kawākibī must have come to the conclusion that a more radical solution was needed, a solution that also reinstalled the Arabs in their historic position as leaders of the Muslim world. *Umm al-qurā* clearly marks al-Kawākibī’s transition from an earlier, still ultimately Ottoman-loyal attitude to a position that stresses the Arabs’ historical entitlement to *spiritual* leadership in the Muslim world and also claims back for them parts of the Arab territory that is currently under Ottoman rule – the Hijaz. It does not explicitly demand the ousting of the Sultan and the end of the Ottoman Empire; but could one imagine an empire in which the caliph was an Arab (from the tribe of Quraysh) and the Sultan a Turk and which had two capitals – Mecca as its spiritual centre, and Istanbul as the seat of worldly power? It is no wonder

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<sup>32</sup> I.e., from the (Turkish) Ottomans (who traced their dynasty back to Osman [Ar. ‘Uthmān] I, r. c. 1299–1323/24) to the (Arab) Quraysh, a Meccan clan to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged and who later claimed the right to genealogical successorship (against the Shī‘a who tried to convey successorship on ‘Alī, the Prophet’s son-in-law, and his offspring, as well as against the Khārijīyya, who wanted to elect the ‘best Muslim’ as Muhammad’s successor (i.e., *khalīfa* ‘caliph’).

<sup>33</sup> I.e., the Hejaz, the region in the west of what today is Saudi Arabia where Islam emerged and where its two holiest sites, the cities of Mecca and Medina, are situated.

that later al-Kawākibī was seen as a pioneer of pan-Arab nationalism and a voice that called for Arab sovereignty, all the more so as he also denounced, in the follow-up work to *Umm al-qurā*, the Sultan as a despot (*mustabidd*). *Ṭabā'ī' al-istibdād wa-maṣāri' al-isti'bād* (The Characteristics of Despotism and the Fatalities of Enslavement) first appeared in 1900 as a series of anonymous articles in the influential daily *al-Mu'ayyad* (The Stronghold [?]<sup>34</sup>)<sup>35</sup> and is “to a large extent a faithful rendering in Arabic of *Della Tirannide* (1800) by Vittorio Alfieri” (Haim 1954 and 2012).<sup>36</sup> In the work, al-Kawākibī

develops the idea that despotism operates by stripping the individuals it enslaves of their will and agency. Moreover, he sets forth an account of a democratic and quasi-socialist Islamic order that establishes individual freedom and social cohesion through its institutions and the virtues it inculcates in all citizens.

(Y. Noorani, in El-Ariss 2018, 354)

The author did not live to see much of what his writings provoked. He died in 1902, of “mysterious” causes, allegedly poisoned by Turkish agents, although this was never proven.

## 1.5 The 'national' voice becoming stronger

Al-Kawākibī's case did not remain an exception. When, for instance, the Lebanese poet Khalīl Muṭrān (1872?–1949) published his poem *1806–1870* (1908) in which he hailed the newly united Germans' victory over Napoléon III and depicted the emperor as a tyrant, this was read “as an indirect expression of the youthful poet's rebellion against the rule of the Ottoman sultan”. It did not take long until his “uncompromising attitude [...] land[ed] him in political trouble

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<sup>34</sup> The title is a passive participle, form II, from root 'Y-D, meaning, literally, “the supported, aided one” or, more idiomatically, “steadfast, victorious; a fortification, or stronghold”. In former times, the word could be part of a sultan's name (e.g., al-Mu'ayyad fi l-Dīn, i.e., the one who receives – divine – support in religion, is a steadfast believer, a stronghold of Islamic belief). It is not clear what exactly the newspaper title expresses. It may also have been chosen in allusion to the Koran, where 'ayd can mean 'might, power, strength' (as in surah 51:47) and the verb 'ayyada signifies 'to support, bolster up, strengthen' (as in 2:87).

<sup>35</sup> Founded 1889 and later mainly edited by the Egyptian journalist 'Alī Yūsuf (1863–1913). According to Peri Bearman (article “Yūsuf, 'Alī”, in *Encyclopædia of Islam*, second edition), the paper dominated the Muslim press between 1889 and 1913; it was considered anti-British and pan-Islamic, served as a platform for Egyptian nationalists and an advocate of constitutional reform. For a standard reference on the history of the Arab press, see Ayalon 1995.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed analysis of *Ṭabā'ī' al-istibdād*, see Zimeri 2007.

and end[ed] in his abrupt departure for Paris and eventually Egypt” (DeYoung 2010b, 229). Shortly after his arrival there, Muṭrān used his new freedom to underline, in what is probably the “most memorable and frequently anthologised of Muṭrān’s political poems” (ibid., 232), *al-Muqāṭa‘a* (The Boycott, 1909, consisting of only six lines), that

no matter what they [the censors, prosecutors, tormentors] do – destroy their [i.e., his fellow lovers of liberty] pens, cut off their hands or their tongues – he and his allies will [always] find another means to express themselves [... and their] spirit will [always] remain free.

(DeYoung 2010b, 232).

Al-Kawākibī’s and Muṭrān’s cases may be extreme. Yet, they can probably serve as an indicator of a general shift in Arabs’ attitudes towards the political framework that most of them still belonged to at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Although, in contrast to a radical critic like al-Kawākibī, many of them still would not question the Ottoman Empire and Ottomanism as such, there is a clear tendency to stress, within the given system, one’s Arab identity and interests, and a desire that this particular, ‘national’ voice be heard and considered in religious, political and administrative contexts. The exodus of many *shawām*, mentioned above, of which al-Qabbānī, Faraḥ Anṭūn, al-Kawākibī, Muṭrān and other *literati*-‘intellectuals’ formed part, is to a large extent motivated by the fact that it had become almost impossible under Ottoman censorship to express any more this self-confident Arab(ic) voice and critical opinion. This was the case even if they did not contradict the basic idea of Ottomanism and even if many of them, ultimately, still remained loyal: it was prohibited to use words like ‘fatherland’ (*waṭan*), ‘constitution’ (*dustūr*), ‘despotism’ (*istibdād*), ‘council of representatives’ (*majlis shūrā*), ‘liberty’ (*ḥurriyya*), etc., in any writing, “and newspapers making use of these words were often abolished” (Zimeri 2007, 8<sup>37</sup>).

## 1.6 1908—Arabs, the Constitution, and the İTC/CUP

However, the abolition of “despotism” and the re-introduction of the constitution and a council-based system of governance were exactly what the majority of *literati* now supported. Even al-Kawākibī’s vision of a future Islamic confer-

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37 Drawing on Cioeta 1979, 176, and J. Deny’s entry (1960) on “‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II” in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

ence in Mecca demonstrates this: not even the Caliph should rule without asking the advice of a consultative council (*majlis shūrā*), and in contrast to an autocratic despot (*mustabidd*) he will have to obey the (divine) laws himself. No wonder then that in general Arabs welcomed the Young Turk revolution, the ITC/CUP and the Constitution of 1908. Shortly after the event, we find, for example, the Lebanese woman writer Labība Mikhā'il Sawāyā (1876–1916)<sup>38</sup> publishing a historical romance, *Ḥasnā' Sālōnīk* (The Beautiful Lady of Salonika [Thessaloniki], 1909), in which a “prominent Young Turk who fights for freedom and as a result ultimately loses his life” is heroicised (Moosa 1997, 248). A similar picture emerges from Jurjī Zaydān's (1861–1914) novel *al-Inqilāb al-'Uthmānī* (The Ottoman Coup, 1911). Matti Moosa's summary shows how the author frames contemporary politics with a lachrymose love story and in this way makes the reader sympathise with the oppositional movement:

Shirin, a young lady, is in love with Ramiz, a revolutionary, who attacks the Sultan's despotism. But Sadiq, an opportunist who comes from an influential Turkish family, is also in love with Shirin and connives with her father to destroy the love between Shirin and Ramiz so that he might marry Shirin. After many intrigues which take us in and out of the Sultan's palace and the company of Young Turks, Shirin finally marries Ramiz, while Sadiq is killed in the revolution of 1908.

(Moosa 1997, 213–14)

“It is reported,” Moosa further tells us, that the novel “provoked great concern in contemporary Syria and Egypt” and that even the Russian novelist Maxim Gorki showed interest in it (Moosa 1997, 218).

As, among others, the example of the famous poet Īliyyā Abū Mādī (1898/90–1957) shows, an Arab's support for the Young Turks and the re-institution of the Constitution still does not necessarily imply disloyalty towards the Sultan. The poet can, on the one hand, in a poem titled *Taḥiyyat al-dustūr* (Greeting the Constitution), welcome the Constitution in eloquent verses and praise the return of freedom, including freedom of expression, concluding with the statement that, from now on, there is “no unjust ruler anymore,” because, from now on, “every just man rules.”<sup>39</sup> At the same time, however, he can, in

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**38** Sawāyā was one of the first Arab women writers, most famous among whom is probably her (slightly younger) contemporary, Mayy Ziyāda (May Ziade, 1886–1941). For a short overview of early Arab women writing, see Cooke 1986; for more detailed surveys, cf. Cooke 1993/2012 and Zeidan 1995.

**39** “fa-lam yabqa finā ḥākimun ghayru ‘ādilī / wa-lam yabqa finā ‘ādilun ghayru ḥākimī.” Last line of *Taḥiyyat al-dustūr* (Long Live the Constitution, 1908; metre: *ṭawīl*) – Abū Mādī [1911] = [n.d.], 641.

another poem, specifically address “‘Abdülhamid after the Proclamation of the Constitution” (*‘Abd al-Ḥamid ba’dā i’lān al-dustūr*, as the title has it) to congratulate the Sultan on his luck and assure him of the support of his subjects:

Oh, Father of the people, [...]

Look, and you’ll find them [your people] standing around your palace, / looking [at you] like a lover looks at someone who is favoured [by God/Destiny]. [...]

The mischief-makers are dispersed now, you got rid of them / after they had all the time long accused the people of sowing discord, fearing [themselves] fragmentation.

Oh, how much anxiety/fear had they sown on earth and always retreated [i.e., denied own responsibility] / saying [to blame is] a people that is a disturber (*muqliq*), and what a disturber!<sup>40</sup>

In these verses, the poet – like al-Muwayliḥī before him (see above) – puts all blame for the inner fragmentation and current disintegration of the Empire on the Sultan’s entourage, disloyal advisors and egoistic officials, but not on the Sultan himself. The latter is rather shown as a victim of those traitors. If he is to blame at all, then for a certain weakness (cf., again, al-Muwayliḥī who depicts the ruler as governed by paranoia), a weakness the poet urges him to eventually overcome, now that the coup fortunately has done away with the Empire’s enemies. All injustice and oppression suffered from the Ottoman authorities before 1908 are interpreted as having occurred against the Sultan’s will; coming to ‘Abdülhamid’s defence, Abū Māḍī assures him of the continuing loyalty of his subjects – they have always been on his side, always shown deep understanding for his difficult situation, even if the “mischief-makers” (*al-mufsidūn*) had regularly accused the *people* of instigating rebellion, and the people will be with him all the more now. But now, they also have all right to expect that he will act according to his true nature and let them feel that he is indeed the benevolent “Father of the People” as whom his subjects love him.

Voices like this make clear that the idea of an all-inclusive empire under the sultan’s wise rule remained a constant hope for the educated elites for a very long time indeed. Other Arab poetry of the time may be less positive about the Sultan than Abū Māḍī’s verses. But in general, most contemporaries still stick to the ideas of “union” (*ittiḥād*) (of the Empire) and “progress” (*taraqqī*)

<sup>40</sup> My translation, S.G. – The original has: *abā l-sha’bi* [...] // *taṭalla’ tajid-hu* [sc. *al-sha’ba*] *ḥawla qasrika wāqifan / yuḥaddiqu taḥḍiqa l-muḥibbi li-muwaffaqi* // [...] // *tafarraqa ‘anka l-mufsidūna wa-ṭālamā / ramū* [sic!] *l-sha’ba bi-l-tafrīqi khawfa l-tafarruqi* // *wa-kam aqlaqū fī l-arḍi thumma tarāja’ū / yaqūlūna “sha’bun muqliqun ayyu muqliqi”*. From *‘Abd al-Ḥamid ba’dā i’lān al-dustūr* (‘Abdülhamid after the Proclamation of the Constitution, 1908; metre: *ṭawīl*), quoted as in Abū Māḍī [1911] = [n.d.], 507–8.

(of society, of the East) that also the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP, Turkish *İttihād ve Terakķi Cem'iyeti*, İTC) (of the Empire) has in its name. Arab writing therefore mostly comes in support of the coup and the İTC/CUP's agenda. An exemplary voice in this respect may be that of the Iraqi poet Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945). For him, like for numerous other writers and intellectuals

[t]he announcement lifting the suspension of the Ottoman Constitution in July 1908 meant [...] that political debate could flourish at home [...]. Newspaper publishing in Iraq also received a boost, because the strict censorship 'Abdülhamid had imposed was lifted and licenses to publish private newspapers could more easily be obtained.

(DeYoung 2010c, 277)

It is not surprising, then, to find that al-Ruṣāfī composed many of his poems during this period as vehicles for support of CUP policies (DeYoung 2010c, 279).

## 1.7 Love for the Ottoman fatherland

In a similar vein, but augmented by the emotional element of patriotic fervour, the famous educator Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī (1880–1968) in 1913 delivered five lectures in Istanbul, entitled *Vaṭan için* (For the Fatherland), in which “he called for building a new Ottoman community based on the idea of the fatherland as an object of love” (Choueiri 2012). A quick glance at al-Ḥuṣrī's background and early life<sup>41</sup> is enough to understand his strong Ottomanist leanings: he was a real ‘child of the (multinational) Empire.’ Born in Ṣan'ā', Yemen, to parents from Aleppo, Syria – his father had graduated from al-Azhar, Egypt, before he became an Ottoman judge and Director of the Court of Criminal Appeals in the Yemeni capital – Sāṭi' had learned Arabic, Turkish and French at an early age and then received his higher education from the *Mülkiye* in Istanbul. After graduating with distinction in 1900, al-Ḥuṣrī went to the Balkans to work as a natural-science teacher before he soon became district governor in Kosovo and Fiorina. Having developed a keen interest in both the rights of ‘national’ communities and questions of modern education, he had already been in contact with the İTC/CUP before 1908, and when he returned to Istanbul after 1908, he was “determined to propagate and implement his belief in a modern educa-

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<sup>41</sup> Biographical data given in this paragraph are excerpted from Choueiri 2012. For more details see Cleveland 1971 (and later editions).

tion system, coupled with his desire to articulate a secular notion of Ottomanism” (Choueiri 2012). He tried to achieve this goal by editing new journals, publishing modern-style school textbooks and taking part in public debates on contemporary issues. Between 1909 and 1912 he even assumed the directorship of the *Dārülmü‘allimîn* (Teachers’ Training College), “restructuring and modernising [...] its entire curricula and management” (Choueiri 2012). Given al-Ḥusri’s prominent position, it is no surprise that his ideas of producing loyal Ottoman citizens by installing *love* for the Empire-fatherland into their hearts through education became rather influential at the time and laid the foundation for later nationalist theory.

## 1.8 After the Balkan Wars

After the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 in which the Ottomans suffered significant territorial losses in Europe, the Empire “was increasingly becoming an association of Arabic speakers and Turkish speakers, and this cast into higher relief the role of the Arab territories in the fabric of the state” (DeYoung 2010c, 279). The awareness of their increased importance and strengthened position encouraged many Arabs to demand a greater autonomy for their territories, a controversial idea for the discussion of which an Arab Congress was convened in Paris in June 1913. The option of combining, on the one hand, the maintenance of “the integrity of the Empire as a bulwark against European colonization” with, on the other hand, a higher degree of Arab independence within its boundaries was debated under the heading of “decentralisation” (*lā-markaziyya*) (DeYoung 2010c, 279).

It did not take long, however, until such calls not only began to take on a sharper tone but, ultimately, also demanded *complete* national independence. Apparently, the general shift of opinion was triggered by

the strictures imposed by the CUP’s advocacy of “Turkification”<sup>42</sup> in the territories they ruled, that is, the deliberate adoption of rules specifying Turkish as the only language to be employed in all official activities, from the schools to the law courts, and (as some Arabs believed) a preference for the appointment of ethnic Turks in upper level government positions.

(DeYoung 2010c, 279)

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Cevik 2020, who describes this process as a shift from a multinational Habsburgian model to a Romanov model that aimed at the creation of one single core nation.

Even then, however, some Arabs still favoured looking for solutions to these issues within the framework of adherence to the Empire. Al-Ruṣāfī, for instance, at first welcomed ‘decentralisation’ proposals in the poem *Fī mu’riḍ al-sayf* (The Flat of the Sword); then, when the İTC/CUP had increasingly become hostile to the Congress, he condemned both İTC/CUP *and* the Arab advocates of decentralisation, “suggesting that they were agents for European colonial designs on the Ottoman provinces” (DeYoung 2010c, 279–80). Jurjī Zaydān showed a similar reaction. As we saw above, he had admired the Young Turks. Moreover, he “saw in the resurrected Ottoman constitution and the reopened parliament the instruments for holding this multiethnic and multifaitth empire together” (Philipp 2014, 114). However, his sympathies with the Young Turks notwithstanding, only a few months after the coup in an article of April 1909,<sup>43</sup> he felt he had to acknowledge that “the Turks and even the members of the Committee for Union and Progress had exercised tyranny over the other people of the empire” and that “the option of separation existed” (Philipp 2014, 115). Nevertheless he still comes to the Sultan’s and the İTC/CUP’s defence when he argues that separatist tendencies in the past were only due to “bad government and suspicion between the ruler and his subjects.” Now, however, “[i]ntelligent Turks, having been exposed to civilised people in Europe and seen how they advocate the tie of patriotism [*al-jāmi‘a al-waṭaniyya*],” have chosen “Ottoman patriotism [*al-jāmi‘a al-‘uthmāniyya*] as their form of solidarity [*‘aṣabiyya*] [...], out of their belief that if they did not do so, their state would be torn apart and collapse” (Zaydān 1909, tr. H. Kilpatrick, in Philipp 2014, 403–04). According to Zaydān, it may indeed look now—after the elections to the new parliament—as if the İTC/CUP was becoming insincere, seeking exclusively *Turkish* privileges; but

we ascribe that not to its [sc. the CUP’s] desire to monopolize power to the detriment of the Arabs or others. [...] The CUP] carried out the acts it is reproached with, out of a desire to maintain the state’s security and in order to protect the Constitution [...]. How dare we blame the CUP [...] for their suspicion of us, since we have not given them proof of our desire to unite with them heart and soul? [...] Apart from supporting the establishment of an Arab league, these Arabs set up the Arab Brotherhood Society in Istanbul. [...] They founded newspapers to defend the Arabs, denigrate the Turks and boast of Arab glory, Arab empires and Arab science. Others wrote articles calling for a Syrian (Arab) union, seeking administrative autonomy [...]. How can the Turks be blamed for their suspicion of the Arabs after that?

(Zaydān 1909, tr. H. Kilpatrick, in Philipp 2014, 404–05)

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43 “Al-‘Arab wa-l-Turk qabla l-dustūr wa-ba‘dahū,” *al-Hilāl*, 17 (April 1909): 408–17.

It may be objected that the CUP's autocratic use of power goes against the spirit of the Constitution. But we would reply: how splendid autocracy is, when it is the autocracy of the intelligent and the just! [...] If it is autocratic, its autocracy goes hand in hand with consultation, because it is made up of scores or hundreds of members.

(ibid., 406)

Zaydān therefore proposes to “restrain ourselves and overlook” what may seem, at the moment, as attempts at Turkification; the Arabs should have confidence in “their brothers the Turks” and focus on the “tie of common interest” (Zaydān 1909, tr. H. Kilpatrick, in Philipp 2014, 406). For the patriotic community of all Ottomans is a “community of mutual benefit or usefulness” (Philipp 2014, 115).<sup>44</sup>

## 1.9 In lieu of a conclusion: Fading loyalty and the Arab revolt

For some time, Zaydān was anything but alone with such an opinion. However, when the İTC/CUP's policy of Turkification intensified in order to extend central control in the provinces (cf. Krämer 1998, 447<sup>45</sup>), this seemed to be too much. Many Arabs may have felt that there was a bitter truth to the old Egyptian proverb saying that “All the thanks you get for serving a Turk (lit., an Oghuz) is a beating”<sup>46</sup> and that all previous loyalty towards the Turks was to no avail and would not pay out.

It is in this climate that Arab secessionist tendencies gained ground against the previous ‘pan-Ottoman’ imperial nationalism and with British support the Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca in 1916 “would revolt against Ottoman suzerainty and declare himself the leader of all the Arabs in their struggle for independence from Turkish rule” (DeYoung 2010c, 280). The aim of the revolt was to create an Arab state stretching from Syria to Yemen, which the British had promised to

<sup>44</sup> Quoting from Zaydān's article “Jāmi‘at al-manfa‘a”, *al-Hilāl*, 19 (Feb 1911): 280–85.

<sup>45</sup> Krämer here refers to Landau 1994, 9–142, and Khalidi et al., eds. 1991, esp. chs. 2, 3 and 8.

<sup>46</sup> *ākhir khidmit il-ghuzz ‘alqa* – Badawi and Hinds 1986, s.r. v<sup>3</sup>yz. – If we are to believe the Egyptian Arabic Wikipedia, the proverb goes back to Mamluk times: “Ghuzz is the colloquial name for the Oghuz, an ethnic group among the Turkish Mamluks. When the Mamluks settled in a[n Egyptian] village, they used to drive its inhabitants out of it, forced them to work for them and serve them, and confiscated their food and drink without paying anything in recompense. When they [then] ended their stay [...], they used to beat the people and mistreat them, out of a desire for harassment and pure chicane [...]”, [https://arz.wikipedia.org/wiki/اخر\\_خدمة\\_الغز\\_علقه](https://arz.wikipedia.org/wiki/اخر_خدمة_الغز_علقه), as of 24 July 2019 (my translation, S.G.). – For a similar traditional saying, quoted by Nasser in his *Philosophy of the Revolution*, see above, note 4.

recognise. In Tawfīq Yūsuf ‘Awwād’s (1911–89) debut novel, *al-Raghīf* (The Loaf) of 1939 – “the first significant Lebanese novel of the twentieth century” (Starkey 2010, 40) – the Arab revolt is shown in a very positive light. The events unfold during the First World War in a period that

had proved a particularly difficult one for the Lebanese, who had been subject to oppressive measures from the Ottoman authorities under the military governor Jamāl Pāshā, and who had suffered a disastrous famine in which up to one fifth of the population of Mount Lebanon [...] had died of starvation or disease. [...] The hero of the novel [...] is a fervent Arab nationalist [...] who belongs to a secret revolutionary organization devoted to the struggle against Ottoman rule [...] and later leads] the Arab forces in their fight against the Turks. [...] In the course of the troubled events, he loses his life, but the novel nevertheless culminates in] the victorious Arabs enter[ing] Damascus in triumph [...] and] thus win[ning] back for themselves not only their freedom but also the loaf of bread that provides the work with its title.

(Starkey 2010, 39–40)

As Starkey rightly observes, this view is already biased by the experience of the French Protectorate in Greater Syria where it could seem that the former Ottoman yoke only “had been replaced by [...] the French Protectorate” and, thus, “looking back with pride to the struggle against the Ottomans of two decades previously, the work also contained a further relevance for the author’s contemporaries” (Starkey 2010, 40).

Two decades earlier, when the Arab Revolt actually had taken place, comments were often less positive, as, for example, Ma‘rūf al-Ruṣāfi’s poem *Thālith al-thalātha* (The Third of the Three) makes clear. The poem

linked Sharif Ḥusayn to two other Ḥusayns seen as traitors to the Ottoman cause: Ḥusayn al-Kāmil, who accepted the position of Khedive of Egypt when the British declared that country a Protectorate at the beginning of World War I, completely severing it from any ties to the Ottoman Empire [...], and Ḥusayn al-Rushdi Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister who had loyally followed his master into the British camp. This satire was so scathing in its denunciation of Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca that it was only published in truncated form in al-Ruṣāfi’s *Diwan*, with many of the most offensive verses omitted.

(DeYoung 2010c, 280)

As the aftermath of the Arab Revolt shows, al-Ruṣāfi and other critics of the 1917 rebellion certainly had a point – in hindsight, the rebellion helped to pave the way for decades of Anglo-French colonial presence in the region. Nevertheless, and in spite of the many obvious manifestations of the Ottoman past in Arab city architecture – mosques, public fountains, street names, etc. – this past “has hardly left any but unpleasant traces in the collective memory of Arab societies” today, as Reinkowski (2016, 248) observes. Whenever Arab authors of

later decades came to look back to the past with a nostalgic eye, it was certainly not associated with the Ottoman period.<sup>47</sup> Reinkowski argues that this “amnesia” may be explained as due to ideological necessity in the course of nation building: in order to gain a new present, the past had to be forgotten (ibid., 249). But this is another story...<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> There are, for instance, some Alexandria novels in which the cosmopolitan past is remembered with a good deal of nostalgia (e.g., Edward al-Kharrāt's *Turābuhā za'farān*, 1985, translated into English by F. Liardet as *City of Saffron*). But in these, the city's former cosmopolitan character is usually described as the result of its location on the shores of the Mediterranean, with a centuries-old history as a commercial centre, open to the world, a melting-pot whose identity was formed in Old Egyptian, Hellenistic, and Roman times and by Greek and Italian traders and sailors rather than by contact with the Ottomans. As for Cairo, its cosmopolitan history is recalled nostalgically by, e.g., the connoisseur, womanizer and whisky drinker Shawqī “Beğ” al-Dasūqī in ‘Alā’ al-Aswānī's best-selling *Imārat Ya'qūbiān* (2002, translated into English by H. Davies as *The Yacoubian Building*). But here, the memory does not take the reader farther back than to the times when the big building – symbolising Egypt – was erected, in 1934, by its Armenian proprietor, Hagop Yacoubian, i.e., in post-Ottoman times. Neither Shawqī's ‘title’ *beğ* nor the mentioning of the Armenian owner are connected to an Ottoman past in the novel.

<sup>48</sup> For this, cf. esp. Toledano 2001, whose findings Reinkowski develops further.